

1. (Unchanged From Prior Version) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus comprising:

- a light source having a plurality of light beam emitting sections;
- a light deflector for deflecting a plurality of light beams emitted respectively from said plurality of light beam emitting sections of said light source;
- a scanning optical system for focussing said plurality of light beams deflected by said light deflector on a surface to be scanned; and
- a photodetector for controlling a timing of a start of scanning of said plurality of light beams by detecting a part of said plurality of light beams deflected by said light deflector as detection light beams,

wherein the timing of the start of scanning is controlled to align the centers of scanning areas of said light beams with each other on the surface to be scanned while allowing starting points of scanning of said light beams to differ from each other when said plurality of light beams have respective wavelengths that are different from each other.

2. (Unchanged From Prior Version) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

- a detection optical element for converging said detection light beams and leading them to said photodetector,

wherein said detection optical element has its optical surfaces arranged orthogonally relative to the detection light beams.

3. (Unchanged From Prior Version) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said detection optical element comprises an anamorphic lens.

4. (Unchanged From Prior Version) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said detection optical element is made of a plastic material.

5. (Unchanged From Prior Version) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said scanning optical system comprises a refraction optical element and a diffraction optical element.

6. (Unchanged From Prior Version) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said refraction optical element and said diffraction optical element are made of a plastic material.

7. (Unchanged From Prior Version) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said detection optical element and said refraction optical element are integrally formed by using a plastic material.

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8. (Twice Amended) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising an incident optical system for leading the plurality of light beams emitted from said light source to said optical deflector.

9. (Unchanged From Prior Version) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 8, wherein said incident optical system comprises a first lens for collimating each of said plurality of light beams emitted from said light source and a second lens for focussing each of said plurality of collimated light beams on the deflection plane of the optical deflector as a linear image extending in the main-scanning direction.

10. (Unchanged From Prior Version) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said detection optical element and said second lens are integrally formed by using a plastic material.

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11. (Amended) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said photodetector detects part of each of the plurality of light beams deflected by said light deflector and controls the timing of the start of scanning of each of the plurality of light beams.

12. (Twice Amended) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus comprising:  
a light source having a plurality of light emitting sections;  
a light deflector for deflecting a plurality of light beams emitted respectively from said plurality of light emitting sections of said light source;  
a scanning optical system for focusing the plurality of light beams deflected by said light deflector on a surface to be scanned;  
a first detection optical element for converging at least one of the plurality of light beams deflected by said light deflector as at least one detection light beam;

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a second detection optical element for focusing the at least one detection light beam converged by said first detection optical element; and

a photodetector for controlling a time of a start of scanning of the plurality of light beams by detecting the at least one detection light beam focused by said second detection optical element,

wherein said first detection optical element has its optical surfaces arranged orthogonally relative to an arrangement direction of the at least one detection light beam.

13. (Amended) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 12, wherein said first detection optical element comprises an anamorphic lens.

14. (Amended) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 12, wherein said first detection optical element is made of a plastic material.

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15. (Unchanged From Prior Version) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 12, wherein said scanning optical system comprises a refraction optical element and a diffraction optical element.

16. (Unchanged From Prior Version) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 15, wherein said refraction optical element and said diffraction optical element are made of a plastic material.

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17. (Amended) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said first detection optical element and said refraction optical element are integrally formed by using a plastic material.

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18. (Twice Amended) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 12, further comprising an incident optical system for leading the plurality of light beams emitted from said light source to said light deflector.

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40. (Amended) An image forming apparatus comprising:  
a multibeam scanning optical apparatus as defined in any one of claims 1 to 18 and 42 to 55; and  
an image carrier arranged on the surface to be scanned.

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41. (Amended) A color image forming apparatus comprising:  
a multibeam scanning optical apparatus as defined in any one of claims 1 to 18 and 42 to 55; and  
a plurality of image carriers arranged respectively on the surface to be scanned for forming different images.

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42. (New) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus comprising:  
a light source having a plurality of light emitting sections;  
a light deflector for deflecting a plurality of light beams emitted respectively from the plurality of light emitting sections of said light source;

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a scanning optical system for focusing the plurality of light beams deflected by said light deflector on a surface to be scanned;

a photodetector for controlling a timing of a start of scanning of the plurality of light beams by detecting at least one of the plurality of light beams deflected by said light deflector as at least one detection light beam; and

a detection optical element for converging the at least one detection light beam and leading it to said photodetector, said detection optical element having a refractive power in the main-scanning direction,

wherein said detection optical element has its optical surfaces arranged orthogonally relative to an arrangement direction of the at least one detection light beam.

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43. (New) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 42,

wherein said detection optical element comprises an anamorphic lens.

44. (New) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 42,

wherein said detection optical element is made of a plastic material.

45. (New) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 42,

wherein said scanning optical system comprises a refraction optical element and a diffraction optical element.

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46. (New) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 45, wherein said refraction optical element and said diffraction optical element are made of a plastic material.

47. (New) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 46, wherein said detection optical element and said refraction optical element are integrally formed by using a plastic material.

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48. (New) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 42, further comprising an incident optical system for leading the plurality of light beams emitted from said light source to said light deflector.

49. (New) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus comprising:  
a light source having a plurality of light emitting sections;  
a light deflector for deflecting a plurality of light beams emitted respectively from the plurality of light emitting sections of said light source;  
a scanning optical system for focusing the plurality of light beams deflected by said light deflector on a surface to be scanned;  
a photodetector for controlling a timing of a start of scanning of the plurality of light beams by detecting at least one of the plurality of light beams deflected by said light deflector as at least one detection light beam; and  
a detection optical element for converging the at least one detection light beam and leading it to said photodetector,

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wherein said photodetector and the center of a scanning width in the main scanning direction on the surface to be scanned are held optically equivalent.

50. (New) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 49, wherein said detection optical element comprises an anamorphic lens.

51. (New) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 49, wherein said detection optical element is made of a plastic material.

52. (New) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 49, wherein said scanning optical system comprises a refraction optical element and a diffraction optical element.

53. (New) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 52, wherein said refraction optical element and said diffraction optical element are made of a plastic material.

54. (New) A multibeam scanning optical apparatus according to claim 53, wherein said detection optical element and said refraction optical element are integrally formed by using a plastic material.